



VETERAN HEALTH NEWS

VA SAN DIEGO HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

July 2019

Mission Act – New Eligibility for Community Care

VA MISSION Act

Upcoming improvements to Veteran community care and what to expect.

Under the VA MISSION Act of 2018, Veterans will have better access and greater choice in health care either at VA or community provider through improved eligibility criteria.

The new eligibility criteria to receive care in the community went into effect June 2019.

New Eligibility Criteria:

1. **Service Not Available at a VA Medical Facility**
2. **Veteran Lives in a U.S. State or Territory Without a Full-Service VA Medical Facility**
3. **Veteran Qualifies under the “Grandfather” Provision Related to Distance Eligibility for the Veterans Choice Program**
4. **VA Cannot Furnish Care within Certain Designated Access Standards**
5. **It Is in the Veteran’s Best Medical Interest**
6. **A VA Service Line Does Not Meet Certain Quality Standards**

Key aspects of community care eligibility are noted below:

1. Veterans must receive approval from VA prior to obtaining care from a community provider in most circumstances. Urgent care does require advanced approval.
2. Veterans must either be enrolled in VA health care or be eligible for VA care without needing to enroll to be eligible for community care.
3. Eligibility for community care will continue to be dependent upon a Veteran’s individual health care needs or circumstances.
4. VA staff members generally make all eligibility determinations.
5. Veterans will usually have the option to receive care at a VA medical facility regardless of their eligibility for community care.
6. Meeting any one of six eligibility criteria listed below is sufficient to be referred to a community provider—a Veteran does not have to meet all of them to be eligible.

For more information, please visit us here: <https://missionact.va.gov/>

Volunteers Needed!



Here are three positions we're looking for over the summer at the Voluntary Service Office:

Volunteer Veterans Transportation Network Driver:

Help Veterans in need of transportation assistance to make it to their appointments. Our VTN team provides over 10,000 rides annually to Veterans in need. Please contact Voluntary Service for volunteer driver requirements.

Rounds Plus: Patient Satisfaction Surveyor:

Assist Veterans in completing an on-the-spot patient satisfaction survey via tablet and help VA San Diego make strides toward becoming a 5-Star facility!

Health Benefits and Enrollment Kiosk Concierge:

Greet and assist Veterans in the Health Benefits and Enrollment department with check-in. Direct Veterans to additional nearby services as needed.

[For additional information about these positions contact Voluntary Service at 858-642-3267.](#)

VA San Diego Researcher Shows Off Advancements in Washington



Dr. Albert Leung of the VA San Diego Health Care System was among nearly 25 leading VA researchers, some accompanied by Veteran study participants, who showed off their latest scientific, medical, and technological advances on June 20 at the Rayburn House Office Building in Washington, D.C., as part of the second annual VA Research Day on the Hill. Dr. Leung shared details on his research, which focuses on use of a form of brain stimulation—transcranial magnetic stimulation—to improve the condition of the many Veterans experiencing chronic pain and persistent headaches. The efficiency of currently available drugs for pain management is limited, and pain killers have many side effects and the potential for abuse.

Find Your VA Priority Group



As a Veteran enrolled for VA health care, do you know your VA priority group number? With the Mission Act’s new community urgent care benefit, it’s more important than ever that you do because your copayments for community urgent care are based that number. Depending on your priority group, you may have no copayment or a \$30 copayment per visit. You can learn more about community urgent care copayments by visiting our Community Care, [Urgent Care](#) webpage.

If you don’t know your priority group number, here’s an easy way to find out what it is:

1. Log into your Premium [My HealthVet](#) account and select the “Personal Information” tab, then select “My Handbook” from the dropdown menu. On the page that opens, select the “here” link at the bottom of the main body of text.
On the next page, click the blue arrow button to download your personalized Veterans Health Benefits Handbook.
Once your handbook downloads, scroll to chapter 3, which lists your priority group number.
2. Or call the Health Benefits and Enrollment Office at (858) 552-7523.

Director Interviewed on Mission Act



VASDHS Director Dr. Robert Smith talked with KUSI about the new Mission Act changes that took place on June 6 and how it would impact local Veterans. See the interview here: <https://www.kusi.com/281783-2/>

Nursing Job Fair



VASDHS held its second nursing job fair on Friday, June 28 between 10:00 a.m. – 2 p.m. interviewing many candidates to fill many positions both in nursing and in support roles. If you missed your opportunity to interview, we will promote future opportunities as the details are firm. Also, be sure to keep an eye on <http://www.usajobs.gov>

Get Instant Updates Through GovDelivery



Get all the latest in VA San Diego feature stories, newsletters and information by registering with our GovDelivery service. To participate, go to our internet homepage and enter your email in the box “Connect with VA San Diego Healthcare System.”

Research Opportunities

Help us advance the science of health care by volunteering for a human subject research project at VA San Diego Healthcare System. More information can be found [here](#).

Appointment Access

Appt. wait times: Primary Care: .78 days
(completed appts as of 5/31/19) Specialty Care: 4.01 days
Mental Health: 2.31 days

Choice referrals:

In fiscal year 2018, VASDHS referred **42,830** Veterans to the community for care at a total cost of **\$103,490,589**.

The top five categories of care referred to the community in FY 18 were: mental health, physical therapy, dental, acupuncture, and chiropractic care.

Calendar

Independence Day: July 4

National Veterans Wheelchair Games: July 11 - 16

**Comments and suggestions about our newsletter? Send them to
Christopher.menzie@va.gov**

Please Take Our Patient Satisfaction Surveys

We need feedback on your health care experience to continue improving the high-quality care and customer service we provide. We send our patient satisfaction surveys via mail and email on a regular basis and if you receive one, please take a moment to complete it. We are listening and want to improve – if you have a good or bad experience, we want to hear from you. We want you to Choose VA!

About VA San Diego Healthcare System



The VA San Diego Healthcare System (VASDHS) provides a wide range of inpatient and outpatient services at the medical center in La Jolla; and at six community clinics located in Chula Vista, Escondido, Imperial Valley, Mission Valley, Oceanside, Sorrento Valley and at the Rio Clinic. We provide medical, surgical, mental health, geriatric, spinal cord injury and advanced rehabilitation services. VASDHS has 296 authorized hospital beds including skilled nursing beds and operates several regional referral programs including cardiovascular surgery and spinal cord injury care.

We are affiliated with the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine and provide training for 1,399 medical interns, residents and fellows as well as 676 other health profession trainees in areas such as nursing, pharmacy, dental and dietetics. VASDHS has one of the largest research programs in the VA nationally with a budget of \$42.2 million, >200 principal investigators and 611 projects.

Number of Veterans who received care from VASDHS in FY 2018: 84,712
***Number of Veterans in San Diego County:**240,926
***Number of Veterans in Imperial Valley:**6,148
Total Veterans living in SD & Imperial Valley Counties: ...247,074

**from VetPop, 9/30/2018*

Important Phone Numbers:

VASDHS Main Line: (858) 552-8585
VASDHS Patient Call Center
(Appointments/Questions): (858) 552-7475
Health Benefits & Enrollment: (858) 552-7523
Billing (Copays, etc.): (866) 802-6381
Billing (Community Care): (858) 657-1313
Billing (Choice Program): (855) 722-2838
Suicide Prevention: (800) 273-8255, press 1

VA Secretary Wilkie's Priorities:

- Customer Service
- Implementing the MISSION Act
- Electronic Health Record
- Transforming our Business Systems